

Project Management: Roles and Responsibilities

Projects of different size have different ways and requirements on how the people are organized. In a small project, little organization structure is needed. There might be a primary sponsor, a project manager and a project team. However, for large projects, there are more and more people involved, and it is important that people understand what they are expected to do, and what role other people are expected to fill. This section identifies some of the common (and not so common) project roles that may need to be defined for your project.

Client - The persons or group that are the direct beneficiary of a project or service. They are the people for whom the project is being undertaken. (Indirect beneficiaries are probably stakeholders.)

Client project manager - If the project is large enough, the client may have a primary contact that is designated as a comparable project manager. As an example, if this were an IT project, the IT project manager would have overall responsibility for the IT solution. However, there may also be projects on the client side that are also needed to support this initiative, and the client project manager would be responsible for those. The IT project manager and the client project manager would be peers who work together to build and implement the complete solution.

Functional Manager - A functional manager is the person that you report to within your functional organization. Typically, they are the person that does your performance review. The project manager may also be the functional manager, but they do not have to be. If your project manager is different from your functional manager, then your organization is probably utilizing matrix management. When seen in a project organizational structure, this usually refers to the manager of the project manager.

Program Manager - The person with authority to manage a program. (A program is an umbrella organization that provides overall guidance for a number of related projects.) The Program Manager may also be responsible for one or more of the projects within the program. They could be project manager on those projects as well as overall Program Manager. The Program Manager leads the overall planning and management of the program. All project managers within the program report to the Program Manager.

Project Director - A role for a senior manager who has some role of influence and control. Many times, this role is given to the functional manager of the project manager. This is not a standard role, and can be used flexibly depending on the circumstances and the people involved on the project. The responsibilities of the role are flexible as well, and should be defined in the planning process.

project manager - The person with authority to manage a project. This includes leading the planning and the development of all project deliverables. The project manager is responsible for managing the budget and workplan and all project management procedures (scope management, issues management, risk management, etc.).

Project Team - The project team consists of the full-time and part-time resources assigned to work on the deliverables of the project, which will help achieve the project objectives. They are responsible for

- Understanding the work to be completed
- Planning out the assigned activities in more detail if needed.
- Completing assigned work within the budget, timeline and quality expectations
- Informing the project manager of issues, scope changes, risk and quality concerns
- Proactively communicating status and managing expectations

The project team can consist of human resources within one functional organization, or it can consist of members from many different functional organizations. A cross-functional team has members from

multiple organizations. Having a cross-functional team is usually a sign of your organization utilizing matrix management.

Sponsor (Executive Sponsor and Project Sponsor) - This is the person who has ultimate authority over the project. The Executive Sponsor provides project funding, resolves issues and scope changes, approves major deliverables and provides high-level direction. They also champion the project within their organization. Depending on the project, and the organizational level of the Executive Sponsor, they may delegate day-to-day tactical management to a Project Sponsor. If assigned, the Project Sponsor represents the Executive Sponsor on a day-to-day basis, and makes most of the decisions requiring sponsor approval. If the decision is large enough, the Project Sponsor will take it to the Executive Sponsor.

Stakeholder - These are the specific people or groups who have a stake, or an interest, in the outcome of the project. Normally stakeholders are from within the company, and could include internal clients, management, employees, administrators, etc. A project may also have external stakeholders, including suppliers, investors, community groups and government organization.

Steering Committee - A Steering Committee is a group of high-level stakeholders who are responsible for providing guidance on overall strategic direction. They do not take the place of a Sponsor, but help to spread the strategic input and buy-in to a larger portion of the organization. The Steering Committee is usually made up of organizational peers, and is a combination of direct clients and indirect stakeholders.

Suppliers / Vendors - Although some companies may have internal suppliers, these terms will always refer to third party companies, or specific people that work for third parties. They may be subcontractors who are working under your direction, or they may be supplying material, equipment, hardware, software or supplies to your project. Depending on their role, they may need to be identified on your organization chart. For instance, if they are partnering with your project to supply a critical component, you probably want them on your organization chart. On the other hand, if they are a vendor supplying a common piece of hardware, you probably would not consider them a part of the team.

Users - These are the people who will actually use the deliverables of the project. Sometimes these people are also involved heavily in the project in activities such as defining business requirements. In other cases, they may not get involved until the testing process. Sometimes you want to specifically identify the user organization or the specific users of the solution and assign a formal set of responsibilities to them